

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 065577
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TO USMISSION SINAI PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY

USINT BAGHDAD PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DOHA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY

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AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SANA PRIORITY

TREASURY

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 520 - MARCH 14, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

1. ISRAEL-ARABS. THE ISRAELIS ARE MAKING EXTENSIVE MILITARY PREPARATIONS FOR WHAT MAY BE THEIR BIGGEST RETALIATORY RAID AGAINST SUSPECTED PALESTINIAN POSITIONS IN THE WAKE OF LAST SATURDAY'S MAJOR TERRORIST INCIDENT. ISRAELI FORCES COULD MOVE AGAINST TARGETS IN LEBANON AT ANY TIME.

2. US MILITARY ATTACHES IN TEL AVIV REPORT THAT THE ISRAELIS HAVE MOVED A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF TROOPS TO THE EASTERN LEBANESE BORDER IN THE AREA OF QIRYAT SHEMONA - BANIYAS AND HAVE CLOSED THE EAST-WEST HIGHWAY RUNNING ALONG THE BORDER FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN. THEY HAVE ALSO MOBILIZED SOME ARMY RESERVISTS, INCLUDING ARTILLERY TROOPS,

AND HAVE CANCELED SOME TRAINING COURSES SCHEDULED FOR YESTERDAY AND TODAY.

3. THE ISRAELI PREPARATIONS APPEAR TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE EXTENSIVE THAN THOSE FOLLOWING SERIOUS TERRORIST OPERATIONS IN THE PAST AND FOR ISRAEL'S INCURSION INTO SOUTHEASTERN LEBANON LAST FALL. THE ISRAELIS ARE AP-

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PARENTLY PREPARING TO LAUNCH LARGE-SCALE AIR ATTACKS, PROBABLY AGAINST TERRORIST HEADQUARTERS, BASES, AND SUPPLY DEPOTS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON AND PERHAPS TO SUPPORT GROUND OPERATIONS. ALL FIGHTER AIRCRAFT AT ONE ISRAELI AIRBASE HAVE ALREADY BEEN LOADED FOR AIRSTRIKES AND ARE AWAITING CLEAR WEATHER.

4. REPORTS OF ISRAELI TROOP CONCENTRATIONS SUGGEST THAT ISRAEL MAY ALSO BE PREPARING FOR QUICK, LIMITED GROUND OPERATIONS INTO LEBANON AT VARIOUS POINTS NEAR THE BORDER. THE MOBILIZATION OF ARTILLERY RESERVISTS AND THE MOVEMENT OF ARTILLERY TO THE BORDER AREA MAY BE TO SUPPORT SUCH OPERATIONS AND TO SHELL PALESTINIAN AND TERRORIST POSITIONS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. FROM SITES IN NORTHEASTERN ISRAEL, LONG-RANGE ARTILLERY COULD REACH TARGETS A FEW KILOMETERS SOUTH OF JAZZIN, AND FROM THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN BORDER AREA COULD STRIKE TARGETS NORTH OF TYRE.

5. EMBASSY TEL AVIV REPORTS THAT THERE IS MEANWHILE CONSIDERABLE QUESTIONING WITHIN ISRAEL AS TO HOW THE RAIDERS COULD PENETRATE ISRAEL'S COASTAL DEFENSES AND THEN GO ON A 45-MINUTE RAMPAGE BEFORE BEING HALTED.

THE ISRAELI NAVY HAS COME UNDER PARTICULARLY HARSH CRITICISM. INVESTIGATING TEAMS ARE BEING SET UP TO LOOK INTO MILITARY AND POLICE PERFORMANCE DURING THE INCIDENT.

6. DESPITE THEIR ANTICIPATION OF ISRAELI RETALIATION, FATAH AND OTHER PALESTINIANS ARE HERALDING THE RAID AS A MAJOR SUCCESS. FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE, IT HAS ACHIEVED IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL, INTER-ARAB AND INTERNAL PALESTINIAN OBJECTIVES.

7. ON THE INTERNATIONAL FRONT, THE PLO HAD FOUND ITSELF ISOLATED FROM THE PEACE PROCESS BY THE SADAT PEACE INITIATIVE. THE PARIS MATCH ARTICLE QUOTING DR.

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8. THE PALESTINIANS DISMISS THE ARGUMENT THAT SUCH RAIDS ONLY MAKE THE ISRAELIS EVEN LESS WILLING TO NEGOTIATE WITH THEM. INSTEAD, THE PLO ARGUES THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL ONLY NEGOTIATE IF THE US PUTS PRESSURE ON THEM. SINCE THE US IS PERCEIVED AS ENCOURAGING ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE, THE PLO HOPES THAT WASHINGTON WILL NOW BECOME AWARE OF THE CENTRALITY OF THE PLO TO THE ISSUE OF PEACE AND THE ILLUSORY NATURE OF THE CONCEPT OF "SECURE BORDERS."

9. FOR ARAFAT AND FATAH, THE ACTION ON SATURDAY IS NOT PERCEIVED AS CONTRADICTING THEIR POSITION AS PALESTINIAN "MODERATES." THEY STILL ARE WILLING TO NEGOTIATE WITH ISRAEL OR EVEN TO HAVE A THIRD PARTY NEGOTIATE FOR THEM, AS ARAFAT RECENTLY INDICATED IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE EDITOR OF THE BEIRUT DAILY AN-NAHAR. AT THE SAME TIME, HE DOES NOT WANT TO SIT BY WHILE EGYPT AND ISRAEL SIGN AN AGREEMENT TO THE DETRIMENT OF PALESTINIAN INTERESTS.

10. THE RAID IS ALSO HAVING A MAJOR IMPACT ON INTER-ARAB RELATIONS. SADAT'S PEACE INITIATIVE, WHICH HAD FORCED THE PLO "MODERATES" INTO AN UNCOMFORTABLE ALLIANCE WITH THE REJECTIONISTS, IS GENERALLY VIEWED IN THE ARAB WORLD AS FALTERING. THEREFORE, THE RAID WILL HAVE THE BENEFICIAL EFFECT, IN THE PLO'S VIEW, OF HELPING THE PROCESS TO COLLAPSE.

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12. WITHIN THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT, THE RAID ON ISRAEL WILL CONSIDERABLY ENHANCE THE POSITION OF FATAH AND ARAFAT. PLO MODERATES HAVE BEEN UNDER ATTACK FOR BEING TOO CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH SADAT'S INITIATIVE, FOR NOT RULING OUT NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL, AND FOR ATTEMPTING TO MAINTAIN CONTACTS WITH THE MODERATE ARABS. THESE CRITICISMS APPEARED TO BE HAVING SOME SUCCESS SINCE THE MORE RADICAL PFLP AND ITS ALLIES SEEMED TO BE GAINING INFLUENCE IN THE PALESTINIAN COUNCILS AT THE EXPENSE OF FATAH. NOW, WHILE THE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS TALKED, FATAH

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13. ARAB LEAGUE. ALGERIA'S REFUSAL TO ATTEND THE ARAB LEAGUE FOREIGN MINISTERS SESSION SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN CAIRO ON MARCH 27 SUGGESTS THAT OTHER HARD-LINE ARAB STATES AND THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION WILL ALSO BOYCOTT THE MEETING. ALGIERS SAID ITS DECISION WAS BASED ON RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY ALGERIA, LIBYA, SYRIA,

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S E C R E T STATE 065577

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 065577 ACTION SINAI INFO ABU DHABI,
ALGIERS, BAGHDAD, DOHA, JERUSALEM, KUWAIT, LONDON, MADRID,
MANAMA, MOSCOW, MUSCAT, NOUAKCHOTT, PARIS, RABAT, TEHRAN,
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UNQUOTE VANCE

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